

ISSN: 2349-5162 | ESTD Year : 2014 | Monthly Issue JOURNAL OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH (JETIR) An International Scholarly Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Integrating Legal Education in Schools: A Catalyst for Positive Social Transformation

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Abstract: This article examines the positive outcomes of legal education in higher secondary schools and highlight the significance of legal knowledge and awareness at higher secondary school levels. The objective is to familiarize individuals with the law and enable them to better adhere to it. It is crucial to develop a curriculum tailored to the needs of school-going students, without overburdening their coursework, and to make legal studies more engaging through the use of important provisions of major and minor laws, short films, moot courts, and village level educational and cultural programs. By nurturing law as a professional course and positioning it on par with other professional disciplines, high and higher secondary school students are presented with an additional esteemed career option. While numerous law universities have made significant strides in this transformation, there remains a pressing need to disseminate fundamental legal education at the school level. However, CBSE and ICSE schools may touch upon certain aspects of law and legal rights as part of their social science or civics curriculum, comprehensive legal education is typically not provided at the school level under these boards. Consequently, the aim is to advocate for the promotion of legal education in high and higher secondary schools.

Introduction: The dynamic nature of society necessitates comprehensive changes across various facets of human life. Similarly, education field also needs some changes in the form of addition for supremacy of law. As Professor Rakove Stated: 'Quietly and controversially, a clause which was originally offered as a weak alternative to the negative on state laws had been transformed into a potentially powerful basis for national supremacy.' In line with this, a new educational policy encompassing significant reforms was introduced in 2020 to address the needs of the new generation of students. Legal education plays a crucial role in driving social change and is an essential requirement for the functioning of a democratic state. To quote U.S. Chief Justice Warren E. Burger's, 'My mother taught us that the time to fix the cracks in the plaster when you first move into a house. Later on, you do not pay attention to them.' Chief Justice A.M. Ahmadi sounded almost the same note of Caution when he said in a lecture: 'I think we have waited long enough to repair the cracks in the Legal Education system of this country and it is high time that we rise from our arm chairs and start the repair work in right earnest.' Therefore, it is imperative to establish high standards in legal education, as it shapes the future of lawyers, judges, jurists, and academicians. The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 recognizes the need to make legal education in India globally competitive, ensure quality assessment, and adopt best practices to ensure timely justice delivery. To achieve these objectives, it is necessary to focus on the following aspects:

<u>Global Competitiveness</u>: Legal education should be designed to meet international standards and equip students with the knowledge and skills required to excel in a globalized legal environment. This includes exposure to international laws, comparative legal studies, and the ability to engage with legal issues on an international scale.

Quality Assessment: It is crucial to establish robust mechanisms for assessing the quality of legal education institutions and programs. This can be achieved through accreditation processes, periodic evaluations, and benchmarking against recognized standards. Quality assessment ensures that students receive a comprehensive and rigorous legal education.

Best Practices: Legal education should incorporate best practices from around the world to enhance teaching methods, research opportunities, and practical training. This can involve adopting innovative pedagogical approaches, encouraging interdisciplinary studies, promoting experiential learning, and providing opportunities for legal research and writing.

The incorporation law into school curricula holds immense potential for fostering positive and progressive societal changes. It has the capacity to reduce crime rates and empower students to analyze and shape their lifestyles in accordance with legal principles and the rule of law. As aptly stated by Justice Krishna Iyer, *the legal profession is a noble calling, with its members occupying a position of great distinction.* Law serves as the bedrock of every society, cultivating law-abiding citizens, lawyers, academicians, and aspiring judges. In India, legal education pertains to the training of lawyers prior to their entry into practice.

In Vinod Mathew Wilson vs Union of India and Ors, 2021 honourable High Court of Kerala observed that 'the inclusion of Law in the curriculum would give a clear insight to the students to have a definite and positive approach to the issues that are faced by the society and consequent to which, a number of problems faced by the society at present would be solved, when such aspects have created serious impacts in the minds of the young students.'

<u>Curriculum Development:</u> Designing a comprehensive and well-structured curriculum is the utmost need to be fulfil that introduces students to fundamental legal concepts, principles, and skills. It should cover topics such as constitutional law, criminal law, civil law, contract law, and legal research and writing. The students must know the practical aspects and real life examples associated with the legal subjects so that they can opt the subject of their choice and get aware about law in daily life.

Practical Application: Incorporate practical exercises and case studies to help students understand how legal principles are applied in real-life situations. This can include mock trials, moot court competitions, and simulated legal research projects. In an article published in Eazyschooling website, it was emphasised that *Providing information to students about their entitlements and obligations within the context of a welfare state is vital. Law education helps students to be educated about their various rights. These include political, social, civil, economic, and cultural rights. As a result, they can begin to seek the advice and assistance of legal scholars to enhance their understanding of laws and how they operate.*

Qualified Faculty: Ensure that the legal education program is delivered by qualified faculty members who have expertise in the field of law. Experienced lawyers, judges, and legal scholars can provide valuable insights and guidance to students. It was held in a case named *Bar Council of India vs Bonnie Foi Law College 2023 SC* that 'Quality of lawyers is an important aspect and part of administration of justice and access to justice. Half-baked lawyers serve no purpose. It is this quality control, which has been the endeavour of all the efforts made over a period of time.'

Interactive Teaching Methods: Utilize interactive teaching methods such as discussions, debates, and group activities to encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication skills. This can enhance students' understanding of legal concepts and foster analytical reasoning.

Instant need of inclusion of law at school level

- 1. To nurture children and make them responsible citizen: Including law at the school level is crucial for nurturing informed and responsible citizens who understand their legal rights and obligations. It promotes a culture of legality, enhances critical thinking skills, empowers students to make positive contributions, and opens up avenues for pursuing legal careers. By imparting legal education early on, schools can contribute to building a more legally aware and just society. Introducing law as a subject at the school level helps students develop a basic understanding of the legal system, their rights, and responsibilities as citizens. It promotes legal literacy, making students aware of the laws that govern society and their implications. This early exposure cultivates a sense of legal consciousness, empowering students to make informed decisions and navigate legal issues in their personal and professional lives. As unawareness about the legal aspect behind love affairs and marriage creates problems in the lives of juveniles as they indulged into a relationship and cross their boundaries by getting physical with their partner without the age of maturity. When parents come to know, they laudge a complaint against such juvenile; this makes their lives of a juvenile worst and they become the part of juvenile justice system. Their physical as well as mental growth is affected in negative direction and in many cases their overall life changes from career oriented to antisocial child. According to CALKINS, SUSAN D.; KEANE, SUSAN P.; Antisocial behaviours (sometimes called dissocial behaviours) are actions which are considered to violate the rights of others by committing crime or nuisance, such as stealing and physical attack or noncriminal behaviours such as lying and manipulation.
- 2. To make them aware of another career opportunity with diligence: Students learn about the importance of compliance with laws, ethical conduct, and social responsibility. This promotes a sense of accountability, integrity, and citizenship, contributing to the overall development of responsible individuals and a law-abiding society. The study of law encourages students to think critically, analyze complex issues, and develop logical reasoning skills. It enables them to evaluate different perspectives, engage in debates, and form well-reasoned arguments. These skills are valuable not only in the legal profession but also in various other fields, promoting intellectual growth and enhancing problem-solving abilities. Legal education at the school level empowers students to assert their rights, seek justice, and address social issues. It instils confidence and empowers them to actively participate in civic activities, advocate for positive change, and contribute to the betterment of society. It equips them with the tools to address legal challenges and make a positive impact in their communities. Introducing law at the school level opens doors to diverse career opportunities in the legal field. It familiarizes students with the possibilities of pursuing a legal profession, such as becoming lawyers, judges, legal advisors, or legal scholars. Early exposure to legal education allows students to make informed career choices and facilitates their transition into higher education programs in law.
- 3. <u>To let them know the importance of law in daily life.</u> The significance of law in human life is undeniable, as it establishes a framework of statutes, norms, rules, and community commitments that govern our actions and shape our way of living. The rule of law ensures that each individual, be it a government body or a private entity, is accountable under the law. It upholds the principle that our society operates based on legal foundations, where decisions are made in accordance with the laws of the land. These laws not only grant rights but also impose liabilities on individuals, fostering accountability, stability, equality, and access to justice for all. According to Mishra D.N, Various organizations including academic institutions and statutory authorities have described various aims of legal education in their context and relevance.
- 4. <u>To advocate positive social change:</u> In order to bring about positive societal change, states must internalize the essence of responsibility, character, and grace, recognizing that they have the power to shape the course of society

through the rule of law. While the legal profession is often regarded as noble, its influence is primarily associated with the judiciary and its pillars, such as advocates, lawyers, judges, magistrates, and legal service authorities at various levels of governance. Law universities and research institutes also play a pivotal role in advancing legal knowledge and awareness. However, despite efforts to increase legal awareness in society through training programs, legal camps in vulnerable areas, such as villages and schools, it remains apparent that these initiatives only scratch the surface, reaching a limited audience. Consequently, the lack of comprehensive information and understanding of the legal system among the common population has led to significant societal repercussions. It was stated by Azmi Hasant that *Legal education should aim at furnishing skills and competence, the basic philosophies and ideologies for creation and maintenance of just society.*

Historical Background Focusing on Enhancement of Legal Education in India

- Legal System long ago: The legal system, which traces its roots back to India's early days, stands as a testament to its rich legal heritage. As the oldest legal framework in the country, it has weathered the test of time and is currently undergoing a period of transition. As it was stated in a report by Curriculum development Centre in law, New delhi that Legal education gathered momentum and acquired importance in fee India. India became free with a large number of its citizens being poor and illiterate. The immediate concern was to minimize inequalities and provide basic amenities to millions of people. With the adoption of a democratic form of government, legal education was expected to bring the legal system in tune with social, economic and political desire of the country. However, its potential for widespread impact is impeded by the lack of awareness that permeates society, acting as a barrier to its full realization. In a society where knowledge of the law is held in high esteem, the legal fraternity emerges as the vanguard of wisdom, interacting with individuals from diverse walks of life. From the common man to skilled technicians, from astute businessmen to tech-savvy IT professionals, from dedicated educationists to innovative scientists, and from compassionate doctors to visionary engineers, all find themselves entwined within the fabric of the legal system. This intricate web extends to officers serving in the armed forces, as well as individuals employed across the government and private sectors. Each person, regardless of their background or profession, may at some point find themselves appearing before the court of law, answerable to jurists who uphold justice and fairness. It was stated by Ivaturi Sundari, that Legal education includes the profession which is practiced in courts, law teaching, law research, administration in different branches where law plays and important role and commercial and industrial employments and all other activities which postulate and require the use of legal knowledge and skill.
- **Beauty of Legal Profession:** This profession's inherent beauty lies not only in its wide-ranging influence but also in its ability to foster a sense of nobility and integrity. It is a profession that upholds the principles of justice, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their status or role in society, is held accountable for their actions. It serves as a pillar of support, offering guidance and protection to those navigating the complexities of the legal landscape. As we navigate the evolving legal landscape, it is imperative to recognize the transformative power of legal awareness. By fostering a society well-versed in the law, we unlock the true potential of the legal system, allowing it to permeate every facet of life. Only then can we truly appreciate the beauty of this noble profession, as it shapes a society governed by justice, fairness, and the rule of law.
- <u>Shadowed by medical and engineering fields:</u> Legal education in India has historically lacked the seriousness and priority it deserves, with limited efforts to promote its significance. Unlike fields such as medicine or

engineering, legal education has not been advertised or given adequate publicity. Its popularity is largely driven by word-of-mouth recommendations or the influence of individuals already associated with the legal profession. This lack of awareness has resulted in missed opportunities to highlight the critical role legal professionals play in national development and social change. It is crucial to recognize that legal education offers a pathway to becoming a lawyer or legal practitioner, who significantly contributes to society. However, the current status of legal education lacks exclusivity. It begins with basic knowledge, followed by specialization and the option for further research or vocational courses in specific fields of interest which could be done only after schooling and not before that.

Career Opportunities for legal professionals

According to Chunuram Soren & Dr. Sudhansu Ranjan Mahapatra, '*The quality and standard of legal education acquired at the law school is reflected through the standard of Bar and Bench and consequently affects the legal system. Ignorance of law is not innocence but a sin which cannot be excused. Thus, legal education is imperative not only to produce good lawyers but to create cultured law abiding citizens, who are inculcated with concepts of human values, legal ethics and human rights.* In today's era, the demand for legal knowledge is on the rise, as evidenced by the emergence of new job titles and positions. Roles such as policy planners, business advisors, negotiators, experts in articulation and communication, mediators, lobbyists, and law reformers are in high demand. Therefore, it is essential to introduce legal education at the higher secondary school level, allowing students to develop a foundational understanding of the law and explore potential career opportunities in this dynamic field.

Upon entering a law college, graduate students embark on a journey to acquire a comprehensive understanding of legal concepts and principles. After obtaining their degree, they are presented with a range of options to shape their legal career. These options include:

Practicing law as a junior: Graduates can join a law firm or work under a senior lawyer to gain practical experience. This hands-on exposure enables them to develop the skills necessary to practice independently in the future. After graduating from law school, many new law graduates choose to join a law firm or work under a senior lawyer to gain practical experience. This period of hands-on exposure is crucial for developing the necessary skills and knowledge to practice law independently in the future. Working alongside experienced lawyers allows junior lawyers to observe and learn from their expertise, understand the inner workings of the legal profession, and become familiar with various aspects of legal practice. By working in a law firm or under a senior lawyer, junior lawyers often have the opportunity to assist with real cases, conduct legal research, draft legal documents, and participate in client meetings and court proceedings. This practical experience helps them apply the theoretical knowledge gained in law school to real-world scenarios, understand the intricacies of the legal system, and develop critical thinking, analytical, and communication skills.

Preparation for judiciary and competitive exams: Many law graduates aspire to join the judiciary or pursue other competitive exams, such as those for the civil services. Engaging in focused preparation equips them with the knowledge and expertise needed to excel in these examinations. Many law graduates aspire to join the judiciary or pursue other competitive exams, such as those for the civil services. These exams require dedicated preparation and a comprehensive understanding of various subjects and legal concepts. Engaging in focused preparation can indeed equip law graduates with the knowledge and expertise needed to excel in these examinations. starting to learn law at the school level can potentially benefit students who aspire to pursue a career in the judiciary. Early exposure to legal concepts and principles can provide a solid foundation and a head start in understanding the complexities of the law.

Pursuing specialized certificate or diploma courses: To deepen their knowledge in a specific area of interest, graduates can opt for specialized certificate or diploma courses. These programs provide targeted training and expertise; to deepen their knowledge in a specific area of interest, graduates can opt for specialized certificate or diploma courses. These programs provide targeted training and enhancing their understanding of niche legal domains.

Employment in law firms or companies: Law graduates have the opportunity to join law firms or companies as legal professionals. In these roles, they handle various legal matters and manage legal affairs, contributing to the effective functioning of organizations. By exploring these diverse pathways, law graduates can align their interests, aspirations, and strengths with the opportunities available to them. This multi-faceted approach not only enhances their professional growth but also contributes to the development of the legal field as a whole.

Suggestive scheme of elementary legal education

It is necessary to introduce elementary legal education as a compulsory subject at higher secondary school level. It can be a choice subject like Arts, Commerce, Science, Mathematics, Agriculture and Sports; or it can also be incorporated in foundation course at higher secondary levels followed by LLB, LLM and Ph.D/ in Law. The school level course will be a foundation course for the students. They will become aware about the laws. There is a reason behind introducing this course at school levels that is the young students have grasping power, reasoning, young energy, fresh thoughts and ideas. These things will help them to understand the law and apply the law in their daily life. This will not only build their strong mindset and the students will become more and more prepared to jump to their dream profession. The preparation for judiciary will become easier for them; the LLB curriculum can also be modified by adding foreign laws in the syllabus. Whole scenario will focus on giving or producing knowledgeable students who will further set benchmark in their profession.

As per an article published in Shiksha.com, 'As an Indian citizen, most of us are more or less aware of our rights and duties towards the nation but, do we know what are the constitutional rights of Indian students? Indian law has not defined any statutory meaning of the term 'student'. All the legal rights available to a citizen of India are available to students in general which makes it challenging for a student in India to exercise their rights in a proper way.'

In the above-mentioned article Prasouk Jain and Apurv Chandola from LPJ & Partners have stated that, 'the word student has not yet been statutorily defined and there is also a lack of any codified law for Student rights in India which makes it difficult for students today to exert their rights in a systematic manner.'

They share,' Laws focusing on the needs of students is a much-needed exercise to be conducted by the Government to avoid biases in academics, sports, and other spheres. Codified laws could further help protect them from the arbitrary action of institutions, individuals, or the state. While the same is under process, awareness is the key for a student to protect his or her rights and we hope that this article helps give an insight into some of their basic rights'.

Availability of elementary legal education in higher secondary schools

E. Edmund Reutter, Jr. in his article, 'The Law and the Curriculum', stated that 'Since schools exist to convey to youngsters' certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes deemed necessary to help them develop as individuals and become contributing members of society, the learning experiences afforded children under the aegis of the school are a paramount concern of government. With introduction to the New Education Policy, 2020 there are number of schemes introduced at schools for development of education system. It introduced transformational reforms in schools and higher education in the country. But legal education is still skipped or eliminated. The schools used to focus on:

- The schemes by central government
- The schemes by state government
- The training programs organized by various NGO's
- Completion of the Course curriculum
- The examination
- The annual result of the students and their reputation

If a state itself decides to incorporate elementary legal education at higher secondary schools, then also a positive change could occur. Under the constitution of India, the Directive Principles of State Policy given in Part IV also emphasis on promotion legal education. Article 37 of the Indian Constitution States about the application of the Directive principles. These principles aim at ensuring socioeconomic justice to the people and establishing India as a Welfare state. Introduction to elementary legal education will definitely promote and establish a state as a welfare state.

Current status of Legal Education: Private universities have played a significant role in exploring the changes in legal education over the last decade. They engage in field of legal education and strive to improve the quality of legal education in India. G S Bajpayee, the Chancellor of Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab has stated in a report published in The Tribune that *THE transformative impact that the expansion of legal education has caused, especially after the advent of national law universities, is perhaps the most amazing development in the higher education system in India. Legal education and profession have become so coveted that aspirants now prefer law, in many cases, over engineering, management and medicine because of job prospects. Till now, the study of law has remained the preserve of higher education. But the idea that basic legal education must be introduced at the level of secondary education is now gaining ground.* of After going through the contents/subject matter of the school curriculum of CBSE it was found that following subjects of legal importance have been incorporated in 11th and 12th class syllabus respectively.

S.No.	Units	Periods	Marks
1	Introduction to Political Institutions	40	15
2	Basic Features of The Constitution of India	40	15
3	Jurisprudence, Nature and Sources of Laws	40	15
4	Judiciary: Constitutional, Civil and Criminal Courts and Processes	40	20
5	Family Justice System	40	15
6	Project	20	20
	Total	220	100

Class XI (2023–2024) (BASED ON REVISED BOOK WITH NEW CHAPTERS) (Textbook Revised in the Academic Year 2022-2023)

Table 1. ¹Class 11th Syllabus of Law 2023-24

¹ Table No. 1 The Table is taken from CBSE website which has open access for all; the link for the same is

https://cbseacademic.nic.in/web_material/CurriculumMain24/SrSec/LegalStudies_SrSec_2023-24.pdf Page No 2

Class XII (2023–2024)
(BASED ON REVISED BOOK WITH NEW CHAPTERS)
(Textbook Revised in the Academic Year 2023-2024)

S.No.	Units	Periods	Marks
Unit 1	Judiciary	25	08
Unit 2	Alternative Dispute Resolution in India (ADR)	20	08
Unit3	Topics in Law- I (Business Laws) Chapter 3 (A) - Law of Contract Chapter 3 (B) - Law of Torts Chapter 3 (C) - Law of Property Chapter 3 (D) - Intellectual Property Law	35	20
Unit 4	Topics in Law- II (General Laws) Chapter 4 (A) -Law and Sustainable Development Chapter 4 (B)- Forms of Legal Entities Chapter 4 (C) - Criminal Laws in India	35	10
unit 5	Concept of Human Rights Chapter 5 (A)-Human Rights in India Chapter 5 (B)-Human Rights Violations- Complaint Mechanism (Quasi-Judicial Bodies)	30	10
Unit 6	International Law	20	08
Unit 7	Legal Profession in India	20	08
Unit 8	Legal Services	15	08
	Project	20	20
	Total	220	100

Table 2.² Class 12th Syllabus of Law 2023-24

There are number of boards for secondary education in India. After going through the syllabus of all the Boards like Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE), Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE), National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), it was found that no much care is given to the legal education of the school going students. The basic concept of Indian constitution, legal services, mixed civil and criminal laws have been incorporated as a subject with theoretical knowledge; but this much is not sufficient. More focus must be drawn as these students are of crucial age and may easily moulded in any direction. So the knowledge of such Acts which may be useful for them must be incorporated in their syllabus.

Necessity of adding elementary legal education in higher secondary schools

This is the era of information technology, economic growth and world trade organization. The legal practitioners must make themselves ready to fulfil the needs of their brand-new customers belonging to various fields so that it should be introduced in schools. Elementary legal education at higher secondary schools will help in following spheres of life:

- Introduction to law and legal affairs will directly be associated with the personal life and will provide enhancement in the lives of people believing in law.
- Legal awareness will sort out various problems of the people.
- Legal education will help the students to get legal knowledge and set career goals.
- Legal education will make the people act smartly.
- Legal education will reduce crime rate.
- Legal education will cover one contradictory topic of sex education in a legal manner.
- Involvement of adolescents in crimes will be reduced dramatically.
- Knowing the rights and liabilities will force the people to follow the law.
- Companies will get smart, focused and knowledgeable man power.

² Table No. 2 The Table is taken from CBSE website which has open access for all; the link for the same is <u>https://cbseacademic.nic.in/web_material/CurriculumMain24/SrSec/LegalStudies_SrSec_2023-24.pdf</u> Page No 8

- It will help in introduction of new legal reforms.
- Now a days the society is vulnerable to crimes against women, this aspect will also get attention if legal education is promoted.
- Incorporation of Law at school level may definitely open up new career choices for students.
- It may directly affect the choices of the people and will become main stream subject.
- The objectives of Bar Council of India could only be fulfilled if legal education is promoted and incorporated at schools.

Recommendations and a way forward

- 1. Incorporation of Legal Education with a framework to fulfill the needs of modern age children is recommended.
- 2. Law as a main subject must be added in the school curriculum.
- 3. Various Boards of Education and Central as well as State Government have a duty to understand the need of law and should act accordingly.

Conclusion

The importance of knowledge, particularly legal knowledge, is indisputable in our society. As the adage goes, ignorance of the law is no excuse, and the law assumes that everyone possesses knowledge of its provisions. Legal education, as a mainstream field of study, plays a pivotal role in imparting the necessary skills to comprehend, analyse, and critique the legal community. Its primary focus lies in fostering individual freedom, societal development, solidarity, and fortifying the rule of law. A prerequisite for producing competent legal practitioners is the advancement of high-quality legal education. Law stands as the guardian and champion of justice and liberty. A National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR) has been established at Hyderabad. While inaugurating the National Academy, the Andhra Pradesh the then Chief Minister, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu observed that 'a sound and competent justice delivery system depended on its inputs which included excellent legal education to provide the finest legal knowledge. Therefore, the primary objective of legal education is to nurture lawyers with a broad social vision. Consequently, the landscape of legal education continues to evolve, aligning with the vision of esteemed stakeholders in the legal profession, aiming to provide specialized knowledge and expertise. Hence, the scenario of legal education is becoming more and more specialized as was envisioned by the well-wishers of the legal profession.

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